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ABSTRACT

Children are faced with an increased potential for academic failure due to less stable family lives and career-oriented parents. Cross-cultural reading instruction practices and programs can provide insights that could prevent such failure for children at-risk. One such program is the reading maintenance program used in Denmark, wherein groups of five selected children meet with a reading teacher for 2 hours of daily instruction for 10 weeks. Reading teachers attempt to adhere to the classroom curriculum, and focus on reading aloud, copying passages, and discussing miscues or errors. A similar program is Reading Recovery, used in New Zealand, wherein at-risk first grade students meet with an instructor for 30 minutes a day for 15-20 weeks. Instruction focuses on teacher modeling of fluent reading, and student reading of short easy books to develop their own fluency. A third program, Paired Reading, used in the United Kingdom, involves parents and children reading together. Children read to themselves until they reach a difficult passage, then parent and child read together, the adult modeling difficult words until the child can read them alone. The reading programs mentioned are only three of many aimed at prevention. They require extra funding, but will save money in remedial programs in the long run, while addressing students' real needs. (Highlights of the three programs are attached, and references are included.) (JC)

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Family Trends and the Need for Cross-Cultural Reading Interventions

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Family trends are significantly different today than they were two decades ago. A higher divorce rate, more single-parent households, and more career-oriented parents are only a few of the demographic trends that have created disruptions in children's lives. (Hofferth, 1987) In addition, child care in the United States is largely mediocre, primarily because of low pay causing high staff turnover. Thus, children who generally thrive on consistency and stability are exposed to different child care workers with varied expectations and styles. If these patterns are as dominant as they appear to be, then schools are faced with the challenge of implementing programs that prevent, or at least lessen, children's increased potential for failure. Cross-cultural practices provide insights concerning special interventions for at-risk children.

Maintenance of Reading Levels

In Denmark, a program for maintenance of reading levels has been effective in helping at-risk children. (Phipps and Nielsen, 1987) Those selected for the program meet with the reading teacher for 2 hours of daily instruction during a 10-week period. Each group is limited to five children, and they are selected for maintenance, not for remediation. Aspects of curricular congruence are stressed, whereby the

basals used in the regular classroom also are adhered to in the reading course. Some of the daily activities include: engaging in oral practice of words and sentences that caused difficulty in the regular classroom; copying passages on widely lined paper and reading the passages to the teacher; noting and discussing errors or miscues from oral reading of the text; and reading assigned pages to parents at home until the passages are read fluently. Again, the main purpose of this program is to help at-risk children maintain comparable reading levels with peers in the regular classroom. According to Phipps and Nielsen (1987, p. 602), "it is commitment, organization, co-operation, and a clearly identifiable method which produce the fine results of 15-50% increase in reading levels for the Danish children who take this course." Although the United States cannot match the homogeneity of Denmark, an adaptation of maintenance of reading levels has potential for providing American children with needed structure within a relaxed, supportive environment.

Reading Recovery

Similar in intent to the maintenance concept is Reading Recovery, a program developed by Marie Clay of New Zealand. (Clay, 1985; Boehnlein, 1987) At-risk first graders are identified and given intensive instruction to improve their reading

performance. Children meet with a trained Reading Recovery teacher for 30 minutes of daily instruction for about 15-20 weeks. The main goal of this program is to help children become independent readers so that they can learn comparably with classmates in the regular classroom. To accomplish this goal, the Reading Recovery teacher accelerates instruction through daily one-on-one lessons. Each child's program is individually developed, carefully monitored, and specifically sequenced. Within this context, the first graders are initially exposed to activities, such as observing the teacher modeling fluent reading and then reading short, easy books for the purpose of developing their own fluency. Afterward, the children engage in the rereading of easy books, in the writing of a story using natural language, and in other well-structured activities aimed at achieving independence.

For Reading Recovery to be a success, intensive teacher training is necessary. A one-year inservice program is conducted by a teacher leader, who also serves as a follow-up resource for the participating school. In addition, parents, principals, and classroom teachers are encouraged to attend the inservice sessions and to use their knowledgeable support in advancing children's reading performance.

Thus far, Reading Recovery appears to be a success. Longitudinal research findings suggest that the vast majority of children in the program are able to perform comparably with

average and above average readers in the regular classroom. (Clay, 1985) Successful outcomes also were observed in Ohio, the first American state to demonstrate a comprehensive commitment to Reading Recovery. (Boehnlein, 1987; Huck and Pinnell, 1985; Pinnell, 1986) Remarkably, most of the Reading Recovery children not only maintained their reading gains but also did not require remedial support again.

Paired Reading

In the United Kingdom, Paired Reading is an effective method for involving parents with their children's reading. (Topping, 1987) This approach is not primarily intended for readers at risk of failing, but it has value for preventing potential failures. Currently, it is being used successfully with children between 6 and 13 years of age, and it also is being extended to the level of adult literacy. Paired Reading is designed for parents and their children in the home environment. The child selects reading material based on his or her interests and begins reading the source. If the text is difficult, the child and parent read aloud together until the child makes an error. After 5 seconds, the adult says the word until the child reads it correctly. This immediate support lessens the child's anxiety. For easier text, the child nonverbally signals to the parent to be quiet, while he or she reads

independently. When an error is made, the correction strategy is repeated, and both adult and child read together again. According to Topping (1987, p. 609), "There is much emphasis throughout on praise for correct reading, self-correction, and signalling to read alone."

An essential aspect of Paired Reading is orienting teachers and training parents about the method. Topping (1986b) produced a video training pack from which teachers can gain insights as well as practice them with cooperative children. Thus, teachers are fully aware of the method. For economic reasons, parents and children are trained together at a group meeting. A short lecture and written materials are combined with a demonstration of Paired Reading. Then, the parents and children practice the method and receive feedback. Afterward, the technique is used at home for an "initial period of commitment" ranging from 6-8 weeks. Finally, the "intensive phase of the project" is implemented which involves monitoring parents and children practicing the method.

Although Paired Reading is used mostly in the home, it can be adapted to the school. For example, children who are at risk of failing can be identified and provided with intensive one-on-one instruction in the learning center. Each child is matched with a reading teacher, a special education teacher, or an older student tutor. Paired Reading takes place about 30 minutes each day (based on the child's attending ability). The

child selects reading materials independently and reads difficult and easy text, using similar strategies discussed above. Support is provided by the building principal and language arts coordinator who monitor this adaptation and implement related inservice sessions. Parents are encouraged to observe their children in the learning center and to attend the inservice program. Consequently, they are in a better position to reinforce Paired Reading at home.

Thus far, research findings are supportive of this method. (Topping, 1986a, 1987; Topping and Wolfendale, 1985) Children engaged in Paired Reading make significant progress in reading accuracy and in reading comprehension. In addition, parents' subjective responses to questionnaires suggest that the vast majority of their children involved in Paired Reading not only were reading more materials but also were reading more diversity of sources. These parents also reported an increase in enthusiasm, confidence, and other related areas.

Summary

Changes in American culture have led to a busy society that often neglects children's continuous needs. Instructional insights gained from other cultures can provide the type of support that at least lessens these children's potential for failure. Maintenance of reading levels, Reading Recovery, and

Paired Reading are only three cross-cultural considerations aimed at prevention rather than remediation. These approaches, if carried out appropriately, require extra funding, especially for staffing. However, the extra money that is needed will result in less cost for future remediation, and this position should be stressed when proposing budgets for additional staffing. The three support systems described here involve both educational and parental responsibilities; consequently, as schools demonstrate sensitivity to demographic trends, they also send messages to parents that they must continue to be partners in their children's education.

Highlights of Three Cross-Cultural
Reading Interventions

1. Maintenance of Reading Levels
   A. Two hours of daily instruction for a 10-week period are required
   B. Each group is limited to 5 children
   C. A reading teacher or special education teacher does the teaching
   D. Curricular congruence is stressed
   E. Parental involvement is encouraged
   F. The main purpose of this program is to help at-risk children maintain comparable reading levels with their peers in the regular classroom

2. Reading Recovery
   A. First graders meet for 30 minutes of daily instruction for 15-20 weeks
   B. Instruction is given on a one-on-one basis
   C. A Reading Recovery teacher provides instruction
   D. Intensive teacher training is required, and parents, administrators, and classroom teachers are encouraged to attend the inservice sessions
   E. The main goal of Reading Recovery is to help children become independent readers so they can learn comparably with classmates in the regular classroom

3. Paired Reading

   A. A wide variety of reading material is necessary for children's self-selection

   B. For difficult text, the child and parent read aloud together until the child makes an error

   C. The adult repeats the word until the child reads it correctly

   D. For easier text, the child reads independently

   E. When an error is made, the correction strategy is repeated, and both adult and child read together again

   F. Praise is emphasized for correct reading

   G. Teachers receive orientation, and parents receive training

   H. Parents and children are monitored practicing the method

   I. The main intent of Paired Reading is to be flexible so that it is used widely on a long-term basis in the home environment

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